

Message Text

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51

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAM-01 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01

DRC-01 /088 W

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R 131022Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1465

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CE

SUBJ: CEYLONSE PRESS AND POPULAR REACTION TO CHANGE
IN U.S. ADMINISTRATION

REF: COLOMBO 2249

1. SUMMARY: EDITORIAL COMMENT ON CHANGE IN U.S. ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN CONFINED MAINLY TO ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILIES AND TO MARXIST VERNACULAR PRESS. WHILE LEFT-WING PAPERS FOCUED ON "CORRUPT" SYSTEM IN UNITED STATES, PRO-GOVERNMENT ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILES HAVE PRAISED AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS, "DAILY NEWS" ALSO COMMENTING ON CONTINUITY OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. END SUMMWHY.

2. ALTHOUGH PRESS COVERAGE OF CHANGE IN U.S. ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE AND STRAIGHT-FORWARD, EDITORIAL COMMENT HAS BEEN MORE LIMITED AND MIXED IN ITS APPRAISAL. IN GENERAL, COMMENTS IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESS HAVE BEEN POSITIVE, STRESSING STRENGTH OF AMERICAN INSITUTIONS, BUT THEY HAVE HAD LITTLE TO SAY ABOUT PRESIDENT FORD. ON AUGUST 10 GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED "DAILY NEWS", COUNTRY'S PREMIER DAILY, MINGLED DISDAIN FOR
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"PREPOSTEROUS VICES OF AMERICAN POLITICAL

SYSTEM" WITH COMMENDATION OF "SYSTEM WHICH HAS THE CAPACITY TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH EVEN THE MOST POWERFUL OFFENDERS". EDITORIAL POINTED TO PRESIDENT NIXON'S "ADMIRABLE" ACHIEVEMENTS IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND NOTED APPROVINGLY RETENTION IN OFFICE OF SECRETARY KISSINGER AS WELL AS SECRETARY'S ASSURANCES ON CONTINUITY OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY. IN AUGUST 12 ISSUE, PRO-GOVERNMENT "DAILY MIRROR" EDITORIAL WAS LAVISH IN ITS PRAISE OF U.S. CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM AND FREE PRESS. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED "OBSERVER" ON SAME DAY CARRIED SUMMARY OF WATERGATE DENOUEMENT, NOTING THAT UNITED STATES HAS LEARNED "HOW TO CEMENT CRACKS IN ITS POLITICAL SYSTEM".

3. EDITORIAL REACTION IN VERNACULAR PRESS HAS BEEN CONFINED TO ORGANS OF PRO-MOSCOW COMMUNIST PARTY (CP/M) AND TROTSKYITE LANKA SAMAJA PARTY (LSSP), BOTH OF WHICH ARE MEMBERS OF UNITED FRONT COALITION. AUGUST 10 ISSUE OF "ETHHA" (CP/M) ATTRIBUTED CIRCUMSTANCES OF TRANSITION TO "CORRUPT POLITICAL SYSTEM IN AMERICA" BUT PAID TRIBUTE TO PRESIDENT NIXON'S FOREIGN POLICY. A BRIEFER EDITORIAL IN SAME PAPER AUGUST 12 FOCUSED ON PRESIDENT FORD, DESCRIBING HIM AS "LETHARGIC MAN". "JANADINA" (LSSP) CARRIED EDITORIAL AUGUST 10 OBSERVING THAT WATERGATE WAS NOTHING NOW IN CAPITALIST SYSTEM AND THAT WHOEVER WAS PRESIDENT MADE LITTLE DIFFERENCE.

4. THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC COMMENT ON EVENTS IN UNITED STATES FROM PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE OR FROM MEMBERS OF HER GOVERNMENT. IN GENERAL, ATTITUDE EXPRESSED BY BROAD RANGE OF EMBASSY CONTACTS IN REGRET AT DEPARTURE OF MR. NIXON TOGETHER WITH KEEN INTEREST IN OUTLOOK OF NEW FORD ADMINISTRATION. VAN HOLLEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, PRESS COMMENTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CollinP0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974COLOMB02269
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740221-0879
From: COLOMBO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740853/aaaabtai.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: COLOMBO 2249
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CollinP0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2002 by cunninfx>; APPROVED <27 FEB 2003 by CollinP0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CEYLONSE PRESS AND POPULAR REACTION TO CHANGE IN U.S. ADMINISTRATION
TAGS: PFOR, CE, (NIXON, RICHARD M)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005